

MINUTES

SPECIAL

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

*

REGULAR MEETING

PLANNING COMMISSION

SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission and a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 6:12 p.m. at City Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by MAYOR RAUCH.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Addleman, Mitchell, Rauch, Seamans, Zuckerman

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Bayer, Conway, Killen, O'Day, Rein, Somers, Zerunyan

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Doug Prichard, City Manager

Stephen Pfahler, City Attorney

David Wahba, Planning Director

Hanh Tran, Assistant Planner

Wyman Wong, Assistant Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Stefanos Polyzoides

Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists

Vinayak Bharne

Moule & Polyzoides Architect and Urbanists

AUDIENCE ITEMS

NONE

BUSINESS ITEMS

A. POWER POINT PRESENTATION FROM STEFANOS POLYZOIDES OF MOULE AND POLYZOIDES OF THE DEEP VALLEY MASTER PLAN

Planning Director Wahba provided a staff report (as per agenda material) and outlined the format for the meeting.

Following his presentation, Mr. Polyzoides responded to various questions by MAYOR RAUCH regarding the perceived types of business envisioned for commercial storefronts.

Mr. Polyzoides noted that this proposal does not include all parcels as there are issues of public rights-of-way that would need to be considered.

MAYOR RAUCH inquired as to how many owners are involved in this project as she believed this is an important point.

Mr. Polyzoides noted that this plan is projected to extend over a 20 year period.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted that Mr. Polyzoides also proposed implementation incentives for a property owner who may not wish to participate in this type of project.

Commissioner Killen noted that this conceptual project is being looked upon as a template and is subject to change. The goal is to make it possible for individuals in the community to walk from place-to-place thus reducing the need for parking and additional trips and stops.

Commissioner Bayer noted that this is a vision only. MAYOR RAUCH noted her concern with property owners that may not be willing to take the risk of investing in this endeavor.

Commissioner Killen stated that land owners do invest in their properties and see the "finish Line" and believed this would be a worthwhile pursuit and not meant to burden the City, but rather become a self-filling dream.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN referred to several items, many of which are procedural, which would require an EIR. He noted his reluctance in investing time at this point as he would like to see a finding on recommended key constraints.

Commissioner Conway noted his observations and questioned if it was prudent planning practice to incorporate high density residential projects with geologic problem areas associated with Deep Valley Drive. He stated his concern with additional educational needs that might come from a school locating in the area which would increase traffic even more as well as considerable challenges relating to open space.

In regards to the former McDonald's site, Mr. Polyzoides stated he might have a problem connecting this site to the proposed plan and that it may have to be independently planned.

Commissioner Conway noted he was supportive of a project that would limit exposure risks as well as allow the developer to pursue entitlements.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL responded by noting that a number of properties are beginning to be recycled, thus the Mixed-Use Committee was formed. It was noted that when The Avenue was rebuilt, the Deep Valley Drive corridor was of concern. She then asked Commissioner Conway if he would make any specific changes to properties other than the McDonald's site.

Commissioner Conway expressed his concern regarding how much retail would be lost, whether there is sufficient capacity of public utilities, and the amount of density.

Commissioner O'Day commented that there does not seem to be a provision in this plan that would include equestrian traffic.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted he has great respect for the Planning Commission and Planning staff's input, but would not recommend moving forward until such time as the City has brought in property owners who are willing to participate in setting guidelines. He inquired if there was a suggestion to link the Peninsula Center and The Avenue. MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL noted there is not as this plan is only a conception and that both shopping centers are looked upon as separate entities.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted that this would seem to be the time to focus on a vision for the commercial district. She noted that the retailers are having a difficult time and that the City is reliant on having a healthy financial base. She believed that the levels of traffic service would be reviewed in an EIR.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that, from an aesthetic standpoint, the plan is admirable, but sees

implementation issues as a concern. He believed the developers would seek a way in which to improve their properties if their businesses were not doing well. He also believed this plan to be overly ambitious.

Mr. Polyzoides noted that the intention is not to redraw property lines whenever there are stores and parks under consideration, but to think about whether there is a viable alternative for how downtown area would be viewed 10 years from now. He noted that the City would want to incorporate a regulatory framework in order to proceed.

Commissioner Conway noted that this would be a suggested layout not necessarily a plan to dictate development. Mr. Polyzoides noted that building types would need to be considered to determine what would be acceptable to the City.

Commissioner Conway went on to note his concern with property locations. Commissioner Killen stated his belief that if there were a place for people to congregate, it would make them feel like they are part of the community rather than operating under a "strip mall" philosophy.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that the incentive to attract developers is density. He noted that residential property is worth more than commercial.

MAYOR RAUCH noted her concern with the smaller businesses as it is important for the City to continue receiving tax dollars.

Chairman Somers noted that issues such as infrastructure and traffic must be studied first.

Mr. Polyzoides noted that if the commercial buildings are converted, the objective would promote more pedestrian movement.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted this gives the City an opportunity to welcome people to the "village."

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN inquired as to how many rural communities have accepted this concept. Mr. Polyzoides noted that Claremont was the closest city in terms of scale, although it is not rural.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL noted that this plan contemplates narrowing of streets, and as property owners begin the recycle process, eventually the area would attract different developers as it has already.

COUNCILMAN ADDLEMAN noted that a coherent design plan is very attractive to a bank in regards to a potential developer attempting to secure a loan.

Ted Wynne noted he is in favor of the concept as presented.

Jerry Garner noted he is also a developer and that from a retail standpoint, the City may wish to decide which way they intend to move. He noted that he has had extensive experience and believed that what is currently in the mixed use overlay is not conducive to what the retailers want. He noted that while the look can be achieved, its use is what will drive the success of the commercial district.

Rex Swanson, Metropolitan Development, believed this plan is a great idea as housing is very important to retail. He then volunteered to assist the City with his experience in this field. He noted that the focus will be on entitlements as far as cost is concerned and may take up to two years before any success is realized. He reiterated that he would like to share his expertise with the City.

Randy Morris, noted that currently the risk to a developer is high because the ability to gain entitlements is unknown in regards to the number of units, market values, etc., and that these matters may be inhibiting development. He noted that the eastern portion of Deep Valley Drive is different than the west side as in the amount and type of retail and office space. He noted it was his pleasure to be involved.

In response to COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS' inquiry, Mr. Morris noted that the larger the project, the more desirable it is and the more need for flexibility.

Craig Knickerbocker, referred to a list of projects in Torrance with which he is currently involved and noted that the smaller stores are having difficulty, but offices were filled to capacity and residential units are doing well in mixed use commercial areas. He noted that approvals must be clear and in place. He noted that a residential development with a parking structure is key to success, but that medical needs should be considered. He offered his assistance to the City as well.

Bruce Soroudi, owner of the Peninsula Carwash property, believed this plan was excellent in regards to his property. He noted that he has also had extensive experience and provided a history of his property with his plan to convert the existing structure into a retail facility. He noted they were close to signing an agreement, but could not close the deal because of parking issues and that that he has made contacts to see who might be interested in purchasing this property. He noted that Sunrise then approached them and that they are now uncertain as to what will happen. He asked what do as he cannot wait another year to see what direction the City will take and noted that timing is critical.

Commissioner Conway inquired as to what Mr. Soroudi is requesting from the City. He responded that he does not know. Commissioner Conway then noted that the City is in the same position, but recognizes that timing is very important and is striving to alleviate some risk in the development process.

Greg Brown, former McDonald's site, pointedly inquired about the entitlement process, how long it would take in terms of the development cycle, variances, etc., as they cannot wait another 48 months before they would see a return on their investment. He noted that he is not pleased with how the site looks as it is an entry into the commercial district and encouraged swift action to move forward as soon as possible. He noted he had met with Mr. Polyzoides on this project and if mixed-use is preferred, there would be long-term success.

MAYOR RAUCH noted that the CEQA guidelines would also come into play on these issues.

Planning Director Wahba noted that in order to create this long-range plan, the cost would be estimated at \$30,000 for the present design. If it was desired to include Silver Spur Road, an additional \$10,000 would be necessary. He requested direction as to amendment of codes, timing, developers participating in offsetting the City's costs, etc.

MAYOR RAUCH inquired as to the funds presently designated for this project.

City Manager Prichard indicated that the City has the ability to fund projects the COUNCIL deems to be of highest priority. He suggested a specific plan recovery fee to be incorporated into the cost of development.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL indicated that code amendments can be done rather promptly with an eye towards allowing projects to move forward with this vision in mind.

City Manager Prichard noted that what drives these projects would be the residential component, but the question would be how to energize the commercial district other than by bringing additional residents to the area.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL noted her opinion to include the Silver Spur Road corridor in the proposed plan.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL moved, seconded by COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN

TO INCLUDE THE SILVER SPUR ROAD CORRIDOR INTO THE PROPOSED MASTER PLAN AT AN ADDITIONAL COST OF \$10,000.

AYES: Addleman, Mitchell, Rauch, Seamans, Zuckerman

Brief discussion ensued regarding amending code language.

COUNCILMAN ADDLEMAN moved, seconded by MAYOR PRO TEM MTICHELL

TO AMEND CODE LANGUAGE TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY MR. POLYZOIDES AT A COST OF \$10,000

AYES: Addleman, Mitchell, Rauch, Seamans, Zuckerman

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL moved, seconded by COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS

TO DIRECT STAFF TO SOLICIT REQUESTS FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR A CONSULTANT TO COMBINE THE SPECIFIC PLAN AND MASTER PLAN CONCEPT AND BRING BACK A RECOMMENDATION TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR COUNCIL REVIEW WITH THE MIXED-USE SUBCOMMITTEE SERVING AS THE INTERVIEW PANEL.

AYES: Addleman, Mitchell, Rauch, Seamans, Zuckerman

B. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED PROJECTS WITHIN THE MASTER PLAN AREA

Greg Brown noted his intention was to create a "jewel box" retail center. He reiterated that it was not his desire to wait an additional two to four years and noted that his current application is for retail use with a possibility of utilizing residential.

Discussion ensued regarding staff direction to expedite the application. Mr. Polyzoides noted that ground floor flexibility must be provided. COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN pointed out that there must be a commercial use. MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL added that this would fit into the plan as it can be used as residential or commercial.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted his concern that this project would be located on a high traffic volume site and would not be a feasible residential property at that corner.

Commissioner Zerunyan indicated that he believed this location would be impractical as it is a commercial district entrance rather than residential.

Commissioner Killen disagreed stating that this project could sell itself and be a self-contained building. He noted there are different types of entryway housing. He did note, however, that this could be done commercially with Chairman Somers adding that it could be tied into the village look.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL inquired as to how this project would match the specific plan. Mr. Polyzoides noted it is impossible to connect this project to the master plan.

City Manager Prichard stated that the intention of the mixed-use overlay was to support commercial usage not turn every commercial property into residential.

It was noted that Mr. Brown's application is complete and was requesting direction from the City as to residential versus commercial use.

Chairman Somers noted his concern with residential development being located at that corner.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding variances, density, parking, etc.

Both COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN and Chairman Somers concurred that this is a difficult property to develop due to the proximity of the post office and the intersection.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the fiscal impact to the City over the next several years.

After extensive discussion of retail versus residential, the following opinions were recorded:

Residential Commercial

Addleman Rauch

Mitchell

Seamans

Zuckerman

Bayer Conway

Killen O'Day

Rein

Somers

Zerunyan

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that there are still places on Deep Valley Drive that would support retail uses.

COUNCILMAN ADDLEMAN noted that residential would still generate property tax for the City and believed the City would come out ahead combined with income from developer fees.

Commissioner O'Day noted his concern regarding critical monies needed from retail sources.

Planning Director Wahba noted that reuse of this site would trigger an initial study under CEQA requirements.

C. POLICY DIRECTION FOR AN ASSISTED-LIVING USE TO LOCATE WITHIN THE C-G ZONE

Planning Director Wahba provided a staff report (as per agenda material).

Randy Morris addressed the COUNCIL and Commission regarding their proposed project adjacent to their office building. He described his project as being a 55 or older development, rather than an assisted-living plan, and noted that they are poised to move forward. He noted that findings could be made for approval and they would be willing to work with Mr. Polyzoides to make it fit into the anticipated plan.

Mr. Polyzoides indicated that because of the size of the property, it would not conform to the master plan.

Commissioner Killen inquired as to the viability of office space. Mr. Morris stated that it was 95% leased with an abundance of parking remaining.

Commissioner Killen suggested the Applicant look into renovation of the office building providing for a more open atmosphere.

Mr. Morris added that this site will be relandscaped and that they have complied with all City requirements.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL inquired if Mr. Polyzoides would recommend this type of project. He doubted that this would conform with the master plan.

Various members had the following comments on the project:

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN: No vinyl awnings.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL: Limit the application to three stories in order to comply with the master

plan.

Commissioner Killen: Renovate exterior of the office building.

Commissioner O'Day: Change the front facade; reduce to three stories, does not meet neighborhood compatibility.

Commissioner Rein: Minor aesthetic adjustments, inconsistent with the master plan.

Commissioner Bayer: Request the Applicant to work with Mr. Polyzoides on the aesthetic portion and meet City compliance.

COUNCILMAN ADDLEMAN: Reduce to three stories; and aesthetics.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS concurred with MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL and Commissioner Killen's comments.

MAYOR RAUCH: Confer with Mr. Polyzoides regarding fourth floor setbacks.

Chairman Somers: Fourth floor must be setback and façade improvements must be made.

Commissioner Zerunyan concurred with the above-mentioned suggestions.

Commissioner Conway concurred with the above-mentioned suggestions.

Mr. Polyzoides informed the members that he cannot assist the Applicant with design.

Wayne Sant, Sunrise, provided a brief history of his project. He noted they would have a commercial component and stated there is a strong demand for this type of assisted living development. He noted that this project would incorporate retail on the ground floor, is pedestrian friendly, and also would be surrounded by office buildings.

Commissioner Conway inquired as to how this program works and what it includes. Mr. Sant noted that the average stay of a tenant is two to four years.

After brief discussion, MAYOR RAUCH stated that this would be an interactive facility for residents who are suffering from various stages of dementia and would be an ideal location to serve those needs.

In regards to parking, Planning Director Wahba indicated that this issue still needs to be addressed.

Mr. Sant then indicated that they have received over 400 cards expressing interest and support with no negative comments.

Commissioner Killen noted that it is understood there is a need, but location is a concern. He noted that he has struggled with how to deal with this and suggested relocating to another site.

Commissioner Bayer noted that the building was not the concept envisioned for the master plan.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL added that this location is a key link from Deep Valley Drive to The Avenue and believed this would be a strong retail component to the commercial district leading up to The Avenue.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS commented that the office buildings across from the Peninsula Center Library could possibly be considered for mixed-use.

Commissioner Conway then inquired if assisted-living should be in the C-G Zone. It was noted that a General Plan amendment would be required to incorporate this change.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL inquired if the proposed assisted-living residents would be permitted on

the street. It was noted this would be a self-contained facility.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS stated that this location is at the heart of the commercial district as stated by the Economic Development Commission and believed this use does not fit in with future retail development.

It was noted that this type of use is welcomed in the community, but another location would be more feasible.

Following discussion, a straw poll was taken on the concept of an assisted living development in this location:

Support Oppose

Commissioner O'Day Mayor Rauch

Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell

Councilman Addleman

Councilwoman Seamans

Councilman Zuckerman

Chairman Somers

Commissioner Bayer

Commissioner Conway

Commissioner Killen

Commissioner Rein

Commissioner Zerunyan

Mr. Sant then asked if the COUNCIL would consider a new application that would incorporate independent senior living with an interior courtyard and elevator.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS stated that there is a strong need for active senior housing.

Mr. Sant then commented that this may be viable, but another site would be needed to accommodate assisted-living.

Mr. Knickerbocker offered to consider his property on Deep Valley Drive/Indian Peak Road to serve this purpose.

It was the consensus of the COUNCIL

to consider an independent living project to match the concept of the proposed master plan if the Applicant were to consider location of the assisted-living facility in another location.

MAYOR PRO TEM MITCHELL also asked Mr. Polyzoides review this site as well.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Approved,

Hope J. Nolan Douglas R. Prichard

Deputy City Clerk City Clerk